



Natural Disaster Assistance for Missouri Citizens

How to Handle Asbestos-Containing Debris

Department of Natural Resources fact sheet

5/2003

Asbestos

Debris left behind by natural disasters such as severe storms, tornadoes and floods may include materials that contain asbestos. There is no known safe level for asbestos exposure. Asbestos fibers are very small and can migrate through the body's natural defense mechanisms into the lungs, where they can damage the respiratory system. There are three major health risks associated with asbestos exposure: asbestosis, which is a scarring of the lungs; mesothelioma, which is a cancer of the lining of the lungs and the abdominal cavity; and lung cancer.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber. Due to its unique properties, it was used in a number of different building materials through the 1970s and may still be found in some products currently being manufactured. It is estimated that there have been more than 3,000 different commercial applications of asbestos-containing materials. A few of the most common include the following:

- Cementitious siding and wallboard (transite)
- Asphalt and vinyl floor tile and sheet flooring
- Flooring mastics
- Textured paints
- Acoustical plaster
- Ceiling tiles and panels
- Fireproofing materials
- Theater curtains
- Blown-in insulation
- Boiler insulation
- HVAC duct insulation
- Pipe insulation
- Chalkboards
- Roofing shingles and felts
- Joint compound spackling compounds
- Brake pads

Asbestos Removal Requirements

Because this material can be dangerous if handled improperly, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources has regulations that govern demolition and renovation projects involving institutional, commercial, public, industrial or residential structures, excluding residential structures that contain four or fewer dwelling units. These regulations include inspection, notification, and asbestos removal and disposal requirements. In the case of natural disasters, some of these requirements may be lessened, but asbestos-containing materials still must be properly managed.



For residential structures that contain four or fewer dwelling units, there is an exemption from most of the department regulations regarding asbestos, unless the structure is part of a larger demolition or renovation project under the control of the same owner or operator, or the structure is to be used for the purpose of a fire-training exercise. However, caution still should be taken when dealing with exempt asbestos containing materials to ensure that any potential exposure is minimized.

Other agencies, such as the Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA), also have requirements for the safe handling of asbestos-containing materials. For OSHA-related requirements contact OSHA's St. Louis office at 1-800-392-7743 or in Kansas City at 1-800-892-2674.

For more information on Missouri's asbestos regulations see the Department of Natural Resources' "Asbestos" publication or contact the department's Air Pollution Control Program at 1-800-361-4827 or (573) 751-4817.

Precautions To Take To Minimize Asbestos Exposure

The Department of Natural Resources recommends using trained professionals to identify and remove asbestos-containing materials. However, if you elect to remove or disturb unregulated asbestos-containing materials, proper precautions should be taken to minimize any potential exposure.

1. Keep storm-damaged debris or rubble wet until it can be determined that no asbestos-containing materials are present or until material is properly disposed.
2. Seal off work areas where asbestos-containing materials may be present. Do not track asbestos dust into uncontaminated areas.
3. Always wear an approved respirator and disposable protective clothing when working around asbestos-containing materials. Decontaminate yourself before going into uncontaminated areas.
4. When working with asbestos-containing material, keep the material wet to keep emission of asbestos fibers to a minimum.
5. Avoid breaking asbestos-containing materials into smaller pieces. While smaller pieces may be easier to handle, this will increase the potential for asbestos emissions.
6. Place any asbestos-containing material that you remove into appropriate leak-tight disposal packaging or containers while the material is wet.
7. Transport the asbestos waste material to an approved disposal facility in an enclosed dumpster or truck lined with plastic sheeting.
8. **Never burn asbestos-containing materials.**

Locating Trained Asbestos Professionals

The department's Air Pollution Control Program maintains lists of all Missouri-certified asbestos inspectors and all Missouri-registered asbestos abatement contractors. These lists can be obtained from the department's Web site at www.dnr.mo.gov/alpd/apcp/Asbestos.htm or by contacting the department's Air Pollution Control Program at 1-800-361-4827 or (573) 751-4817.

Local Agencies

Prior to proceeding with a project, check with local agencies to determine whether they have more protective requirements for asbestos removal and whether permits for demolition or renovation are required.

In Missouri, there are four local agencies to which the department has delegated asbestos-related activities. If you are in one of the jurisdictions listed below, coordinate your asbestos-related activities through one of the following offices:

Kansas City proper: Kansas City Health Department, (816) 513-6314

St. Louis City proper: St. Louis Division of Air Pollution Control, (314) 613-7300

St. Louis County: St. Louis County Health Department, (314) 615-8923

Springfield proper: Springfield-Greene County Health Department, (417) 864-1662

For More Information Contact

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